DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 435 466 PS 028 034

AUTHOR Baker, Linda; Sonnenschein, Susan; Serpell, Robert
TITLE A Five-Year Comparison of Actual and Recommended Parental Practices for Promoting Children's Literacy Development.
SPONS AGENCY National Reading Research Center, College Park, MD.; National Inst. of Child Health and Human Development (NIH), Bethesda, MD.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999). "In K. Roskos, 'Early Literacy at the Crossroads: Policy, Practice, and Promise.'"
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; Interviews; *Literacy; Longitudinal Studies; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parents as Teachers; Position Papers; Predictor Variables; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS International Reading Association; National Association Educ of Young Children

ABSTRACT

This report details a 5-year study comparing family literacy practices of families from preschool to Grade 3 with recommendations from the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association (NAEYC-IRA). Participating were African- and European-American families of children attending Baltimore public schools. At the end of 5 years, the sample totaled about 54 families. Data were collected through yearly parent interviews regarding literacy-related beliefs and practices, periodic observations of parent-child literacy interactions, a week-long parent diary detailing their child's everyday experiences, and yearly testing of children on literacy tasks. Recommendations for parental practices and emerging literacy include: (1) engage in shared book reading; (2) provide frequent and varied oral language experiences; (3) encourage self-initiated print interactions; (4) visit the library regularly; (5) demonstrate the value of literacy in everyday life; (6) promote reading motivation; (7) foster pride and self- efficacy in reading; and (8) communicate with teachers and be involved in school. The report concludes that there is evidence that parents from diverse sociocultural backgrounds do follow the NAEYC-IRA guidelines. However, the report also notes that the guidelines do not give advice for what parents ought not do, for example, using drill and practice to develop reading abilities. Appendices include 9 tables that detail family practices recommended in the NAEYC/IRA Position Statement. (Contains 14 references.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 435 466

A FIVE-YEAR COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND RECOMMENDED PARENTAL PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Linda Baker, Susan Sonnenschein,
and Robert Serpell

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Linda Baker

In K. Roskos (Chair), Early literacy at the crossroads: Policy, practice, and promise. Symposium presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, April 1999. Support for this research was provided by the National Reading Research Center and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Correspondence may be addressed to Linda Baker, Department of Psychology, UMBC, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore MD 21250; e-mail: Baker@umbc.edu.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Five-Year Comparison of Actual and Recommended Parental Practices for Promoting Children's Literacy Development

Linda Baker, Susan Sonnenschein, and Robert Serpell
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The IRA/NAEYC position statement specifies what parents and family members can do to promote children's development in early reading and writing. It includes a listing of recommended practices in each of 5 phases from preschool to Grade 3. We have conducted a 5-year longitudinal study that corresponds to this same time frame that provides detailed information about literacy-related activities in the home and children's early competencies. The goals of this presentation are to compare the actual practices documented in our study with those recommended in the position statement and to consider the implications for children's early literacy development when the everyday practices are congruent with espoused policy and when they are not.

The Early Childhood Project, as the study is known, focused on the development of literacy in urban children from a variety of sociocultural groups, and it included a broad array of measures of home experiences, parental beliefs, and children's competencies. The research was guided in part by the perspective that underlies the NAEYC/IRA guidelines, namely, that children are exposed from infancy onwards to cultural practices that provide opportunities for learning about reading and writing in a social context.

Children in the study attended public schools in Baltimore. They were selected for participation such that African American and European American families were represented in the sample at both low income and middle income levels. Participants were recruited in two phases. Forty-one pre-kindergarten children and their primary caregivers (usually mothers) were recruited in 1992-93. All but 10 of these children were from low income communities. A second group of participants (about 35 families) was recruited in 1994-95, when all of the children were about to begin or just beginning first grade. The expanded sample was more balanced with respect to income level. As is to be expected in longitudinal studies, we had attrition over the 5 years, with a final sample of about 54 families.

Parents were interviewed in their homes about their literacy-related beliefs and practices each year, and several parent-child literacy interactions were observed. The interviews included both structured rating scales, such as an inventory of the frequency of participation in literacy-related activities, and open-ended questions probing such topics as parents' views of how to help their children learn to read. Parents also kept a diary when they first entered the project, detailing their child's everyday experiences over the course of a week. Children were tested at their schools each year on a variety of literacy tasks that were modified over time in response to children's emerging competencies. For example, during the first years of the project children's concepts about print and their understanding of the purposes of reading were assessed, as well as letter knowledge and simple phonological awareness, among other skills. During the latter years of the project, these tasks were dropped and assessments of word recognition, reading comprehension, complex phonemic awareness, and motivation were added.

In this presentation we examine parental reports of children's everyday activities that relate to the recommendations in the IRA/NAEYC guidelines. We also consider relations of home experiences to children's reading. The NAEYC/IRA recommendations for parents appear in a continuum of development, organized by phases corresponding to preschool through grade 3. Rather than following this chronological sequence, we have re-organized the practices according to what we see as central themes underlying the recommendations as a whole, as shown in Table 1. We discuss each of these themes in turn. Tables 2-9 include the recommendations for each of the 8 themes, along with key evidence from the Early Childhood Project relevant to the theme. Citations are not included within the paper itself, but a listing of sources appears at the end of the paper.

Engage in Shared Book Reading

Shared book reading is of course the activity most often recommended to parents for helping their children learn to read. The Position Statement gives attention to this activity, with recommendations in the first 4 phases (Table 2). In our project, too, we gave considerable attention to this activity. Parents were asked each year of the project about the frequency of different forms of book-reading they engaged in with their children. And many other components of the project reflected this concern as well, including observations of shared book reading and many interview questions. Consistent with other studies, our results provide support for these recommendations in terms of a variety of child outcomes.

Notice that the shared book reading recommendation in the position statement dropped out in Grade 3. Parents might take this to mean that the activity should no longer occur. Was this the intent of the authors of the position statement? Probably not. Because we had data on storybook reading over the length of the project, we were able to determine whether parents do decrease the frequency of reading to their children as they become independent readers. In pre-kindergarten, 56% of the parents reported daily storybook reading; in kindergarten/grade 1 the figure was 53%, Grade 2, 42% and grade 3 34%. One quarter of the parents of the third graders reported that they never read to their child! Interestingly, this drop off in Grade 3 was most dramatic for middle income European American families. This group of children had the highest reading achievement in Grade 3; perhaps their mothers thought that shared reading was no longer of value because their children were able to read independently.

The NAEYC/IRA guidelines do not say anything to parents about books with an explicitly educational focus--the only types that are mentioned are stories with predictable text and informational stories. Does this mean they do not recommend ABC-type books? We do have some evidence that such books are of value. In an analysis of how early home experiences in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten relate to later reading outcomes, we found that experience with ABC-type books during pre-kindergarten was a strong predictor of word recognition in Grades 1, 2, and 3, after controlling for the effects of maternal education. Interestingly, shared reading of storybooks did not account for any additional variance in grades 1 and 2, although shared storybook reading when the children were in kindergarten did account for 8% of the variance in Grade 3.

We also have some evidence to help account for this genre effect. When the children were in kindergarten, we observed them in a joint book-reading session with the person they were

most likely to read with at home, usually the mother or an older sibling. One of the categories we used for coding the verbalizations was a focus on print, such as "N is also in your name," and "What's that word? Spell it." This kind of talk occurred very infrequently. However, it was more common with certain types of books, including alphabet books, as well as rhyming and predictable language books. It may be that books with a more explicit educational focus are more useful for fostering the skills involved in word recognition than conventional storybooks.

Notice that the recommendations for first and second graders are that children should read to their parents as well as that parents should read to their children. We have a word of caution. When the children in our study were completing Grade 1, we videotaped a shared book reading session in which either the child read to the parent or the parent read to the child or they shared responsibility, as they chose. We coded the verbal interactions as to the content of the utterances, and we also coded the affective quality of the interaction. When the parent served as reader, there was more talk about the non-immediate context--the kind of talk that extends children's experiences and is thought to promote text comprehension skills. When the child served as reader, there was more talk about reading the words on the page--usually the parent simply supplied the word if the child hesitated or stumbled. Moreover, the affective quality of the interaction was more positive when the parent was the reader than when the child was the reader. And, finally, the more the parent tried to provide specific graphophonemic help for the child reader, the less positive the affective atmosphere. Clearly, the shared storybook experience varies considerably depending on who is doing the reading. Children may miss out on the oral language stimulation provided by shared bookreading if the parent does not read to the child but rather expects the child to read to him or her. And if the child is a struggling reader, needing considerable help in recognizing words, he or she may find the experience unpleasant rather than rewarding, with potential long term implications for motivation and achievement.

Provide Frequent and Varied Oral Language Experiences

The Position Statement gives considerable emphasis to the importance of oral language development to reading and writing, as shown in Table 3. Our data show that the majority of the children do get such experiences. For example, across several years, about 80% of the parents reported that their child engaged in mealtime conversations on a daily basis. We also asked about children's participation in oral storytelling, an activity likely to foster narrative competence in particular. Across the years, about 58% of the families reported daily or at least weekly storytelling. We found that frequent participation in storytelling was positively related to children's narrative ability, as assessed in one of our pre-kindergarten measures.

We included several activities in our inventory of everyday activities that had the potential to foster phonological awareness. One of these was playing word games, which often involve rhyme or alliteration. The position statement recommended that teachers of preschoolers engage children in language games, but language games were not mentioned in the recommendations for parents. In our study, word games were not a daily occurrence for most families, but about 50% reported at least weekly engagement from kindergarten through grade 3. Home experiences such as these influence the development of phonological awareness as well as early reading competencies. Based on data collected when the children in our sample were in pre-kindergarten, we found that knowledge of nursery rhymes was a strong predictor of

rhyme sensitivity, as was frequency of engagement in word games and language play at home. Nursery rhyme knowledge was a powerful predictor of word recognition in Grades 1, 2, and 3 after controlling for maternal education.

Encourage self-initiated interactions with print

Literacy development depends on children choosing to engage with print on a regular basis. The NAEYC/IRA position statement gives attention to this point (see Table 4), as did we.

Independent drawing and writing activities. Across all 5 years, drawing was a frequent recurrent activity for most children, with more than half drawing on a daily basis. We asked about children's writing in different ways across the years. When the children were in prekindergarten and kindergarten, 64% engaged in writing on a daily basis. In later years, we asked about letter writing, journal writing, and story writing--none of these occurred with much frequency.

In our early interviews with parents, many spontaneously described their children playing school. We asked parents when the children were in first grade to describe the kinds of activities that took place. Most of these play-school activities included writing letters and words. We asked specifically about the frequency of playing school in Grades 2 and 3: 57% reported daily or weekly play.

Independent reading activities. Each year after the first, we specifically asked parents to distinguish whether children's reading occurred with others or alone. Thus, we can examine children's independent reading of different types of materials across the years. For storybook reading, the most frequent genre, 53% of the children in kindergarten reportedly looked at books on their own on a daily basis, and another 33% at least weekly. The frequencies were fairly constant across grades 1 and 2, but children from low income families had lower frequencies than those in middle income families. In grade 3 there was a drop, most pronounced for the middle income European American families. This drop likely reflects the fact that children were beginning to read chapter books on their own.

Children did not frequently read other genres independently, just as parents did not frequently read other genres to them. Across the years, mean ratings for magazines, newspapers, nonfiction, and even comics, ranged between rarely and about once a week.

Self-initiated interactions with print are clearly important to later literacy development. For example, we found significant relations between the frequency with which children recruited at the beginning of first grade independently looked at or read any type of text or engaged in writing activities and their word identification and reading comprehension in Grades 1 and 2. And, among children who scored low on a composite measure of orientation to print in kindergarten/Grade 1, those who went on to become good readers had more frequent independent experiences with a breadth of print materials (involving both reading and writing) in Grades 2 and 3 than those who subsequently were poor readers.

The third and fourth recommendations don't necessarily imply voluntary activity on the part of the child -- but choice is critical, we believe. Compare these comments, the first from a parent

of a successful third grade reader, the second from a parent of a struggling reader: (1) "...we'll have books lying all over the kitchen and she'll just pick one up and sit at the table like while she reads." (2) "to get him to pick up a book is asking a lot."

Visit the Library Regularly

A large body of research attests to the importance of the library in promoting literacy development. The NAEYC/IRA guidelines recommend library visits to parents in two of the 5 phases (see Table 5). The authors acknowledge that the lists are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive, but it was somewhat surprising that library visits were not mentioned in all 5 years.

In the Early Childhood Project, we asked parents each year the frequency with which their child visited the library. The ratings were lower than for many of the other relevant activities, but given the borrowing period of several weeks, daily or even weekly visits would not be expected. The mean ratings did not differ across time, but consistent with other studies, low income families visited the library less often than middle income families.

In an analysis of the relation of early home experiences to the development of word recognition, frequency of visits to the library when children were in pre-kindergarten was strongly predictive of word recognition in Grades 1, 2, and 3 after controlling for the effects of maternal education. Of course, it is not going to the library that in itself accounts for this relation, but rather all that going to the library entails. First, it reflects parental valuing of books and reading. Second, it exposes children to a place that exists almost entirely for the purpose of making large numbers of books widely accessible, demonstrating the importance of books and reading in the larger society. Third, it gives children an opportunity to make choices about what they would like to read or have read to them; intrinsic interest is critical to self-initiated interactions with print. And fourth, frequent visits to the library make it likely that a breadth of print materials will be available at home.

Demonstrate the Value of Literacy in Everyday Life

The position statement emphasizes that young children need to see the functional value of reading and writing. Activities should be meaningful and purposeful, whether they involve reading a story, writing a letter to a grandparent, or using print to accomplish a task or goal of everyday life. Several recommendations address this latter function of literacy (see Table 6).

Many of the activities included in our ecological inventory were intended to capture children's experiences with print as a component of everyday life or in the service of accomplishing another goal. We asked parents about children's participation in food preparation, which at least on occasion involves reading recipes and package directions. About 64% of the parents reported daily or at least weekly participation both in prekindergarten and kindergarten. We also asked about children's involvement in shopping trips across all years. Parents often reported their children playing a role in picking out food items at the grocery store as early as pre-kindergarten, again paying attention to the print. Ratings for playing board games were collected each year of the project; as children's literacy skills increased participation became more frequent, by Grade 3 70% played board games on a daily or at least a weekly basis.

Parents' diary reports also indicated that their children were exposed to print as a part of daily routines, and they held the perspective that literacy was a necessary ingredient of everyday life. The children themselves were aware of this fact when we asked them in first grade why people read and why it is important to learn to read.

Promote Children's Motivation for Reading

The IRA/NAEYC guidelines give surprisingly little attention to reading motivation. The recommendations for parents do not reference this important component of literacy development directly. However, there are several references to various dimensions of motivation in recommendations we have already introduced (see Table 7). And of course, many of the other recommended practices have the potential to enhance children's motivation. Notice that all three of these are in Phase 5, third grade--rather late along the continuum of development. We were also troubled by the recommendations for teachers -- although many of them are likely to have the desirable outcome of fostering motivation, only one directly addressed a relevant motivation dimension: Phase 4 (Grade 2): model enjoyment of reading.

Many parents in our study gave considerable emphasis to the importance of building children's motivation for reading. They emphasized reading as an enjoyable activity and sought to increase children's interest in it. We found that parents hold different perspectives with respect to literacy that can be summarized as follows:

1. Literacy is a source of entertainment; book reading itself is fun, and there are many other enjoyable activities in which literacy plays a role.
2. Literacy consists of a set of skills that should be deliberately cultivated; children should be given opportunities to practice their emerging competencies.

Middle-income parents showed greater endorsement of the perspective that literacy is a source of entertainment than did low-income parents, whereas low-income parents gave more attention to the perspective that literacy is a skill to be deliberately cultivated.

These perspectives have implications for children's literacy development. For example, children whose parents had an entertainment perspective attained higher scores on tests of comprehension and word recognition in grades one, two, and three than children whose parents had stronger endorsement of a skills perspective.

We found that the affective quality of parent-child interactions contributes to children's reading motivation. In our observation of shared book reading when the children were in kindergarten, the social/affective features of the interaction were analyzed. The affective quality of the interaction predicted children's motivation for reading in first grade and in second grade. Thus, children who experienced reading in a comfortable and supportive social context at age 5 were more likely to recognize the value of reading, show interest in reading, and have positive concepts of themselves as readers in subsequent years.

The evidence is clear that motivation is critical to independent reading, and that frequent independent reading is critical to reading development. In our study, children's self-reported motivation for reading was correlated with parental reports of the frequency with which their second graders choose to read material not assigned by their teachers. And, children whose

parents emphasized the importance of enjoying reading scored higher on the motivation scale in first grade, demonstrating again the contribution of parental beliefs.

Foster a Sense of Pride and Self-Efficacy in Literacy

This theme is closely related to the previous one. The position statement does not explicitly recommend to parents that they help children develop a sense of pride in their literacy accomplishments, but several of the recommendations have the potential to do just that (see Table 8). We did not have items in our ecological inventory that tapped these specific recommendations, but parents in their diaries and responses to various interview questions often indicated such practices. Refrigerator displays of children' work were common.

The instrument we developed to assess motivation for reading included items dealing with children's sense of themselves as readers. Most of the children, even those who had not gotten off to a strong start, had positive views of their competencies in Grades 1 and 2. We know that self-efficacy beliefs begin to drop in the later grades; it is important that parents follow recommendations such as these to help counteract the drop.

Communicate with Teachers and Be Involved with School

The final theme takes us beyond the family to focus on home-school connections. The position statement indicates the importance of communication with teachers and school involvement (see Table 9). We did not include questions to parents in our ecological inventory about school involvement, but several interview items over the years explored their views in this area. In addition, interviews with the teachers provided information on the extent to which parents communicated with the teachers and were perceived as being involved.

We were struck by the fact that home-school connections were not given attention in phases 1 and 2. The absence of a recommendation could be misinterpreted to mean that it doesn't matter if parents aren't involved in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Or perhaps it is assumed that parents will be heavily involved in the early years, and so explicit recommendations were only included when drop off might occur. Support for such a drop-off was obtained in our study: Second grade teachers reported considerably less involvement by the same parents who were rated as heavily involved when their children were in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.

We have not yet analyzed our data with respect to relations between home-school connections and child literacy outcomes. However, other studies have shown that children do better in school when such connections are strong (e.g., Snow et al., 1991).

An unaddressed theme: Promote children's knowledge of the world

Overall, the themes addressed in the NAEYC/IRA guidelines are those we agree are of primary importance for parents in their efforts to promote their children's early literacy development. The activities we chose to include in our ecological inventory, selected on the basis of research evidence for their value, fall quite closely within the same themes. There is one area that we gave some emphasis to, however, that was not apparent in the

recommendations to parents--specifically, exposure to opportunities to acquire knowledge of the world. Television serves as a valuable tool for acquiring knowledge, which in turn promotes reading comprehension and interest in reading. It was interesting to us to note that television was not mentioned, either positively or negatively, in the NAEYC/IRA guidelines. In the Early Childhood Project, television viewing was the most common recurrent activity--engaged in on a daily basis by almost all children, regardless of income level or ethnicity, across all 5 years of the study.

Children also acquire knowledge of the world through first-hand experience. The variety of experiences to which children are exposed by their families plays an important role in expanding the child's knowledge base. Trips to stores and libraries, visits with friends and relatives, participation in organized activities, and informal play all provide knowledge and experience that will serve children well in reading. We collected information about children's participation in such activities as well. The NAEYC/IRA recommendations for parents do not explicitly mention the value of such experiences. However, the position statement does indicate that preschool children need "firsthand experiences that expand children's vocabulary, such as trips in the community and exposure to various tools, objects and materials."

Conclusions

The NAEYC/IRA position statement can serve a valuable role in increasing parental awareness of the informal opportunities available in the home and community for promoting literacy development. We have evidence to support these recommendations, and we have evidence that parents from diverse sociocultural backgrounds do follow them. In our concluding remarks, we focus on what the position statement does not address. Parents are given advice for what they should do, but they are not given advice for what they should not do. They are not given any information regarding instruction in foundational skills like letter knowledge. We see from our study that children of parents who advocate drill and practice do not fare as well in reading development as children whose parents are sensitive to motivational issues-- enjoyment and interest. Parents who see that children are interested in letters and words can provide opportunities for children to learn more about them in informal playful settings rather than formal school-like lessons. We have relevant evidence with respect to flash cards in an analysis of successful vs. struggling third grade readers in our project. A successful reader loved to play school and used flash cards as part of her play. A struggling reader was coerced into reviewing flash cards: "we have flash cards for spelling words and it takes him the whole day to sit down and do it. It's something (child) just ain't into just yet...I even punish him to tell the truth, but it's I just have to keep reminding him."

A skills-based approach reflects an out-dated perspective on how literacy development occurs. It is similar to the reading-readiness view the position statement argues against. Parents endorsing this perspective believe that young children need to acquire certain skills in order to be ready to learn to read when they start school. However, our data indicate that getting an early start with letters at age 4, for example, does not make any difference in the long run. Letter knowledge was not a significant predictor of word recognition until children were in kindergarten. This has important implications for parents. What it suggests is that children who start preschool with good letter knowledge are not any more likely to be successful readers than children who acquire this knowledge a little later, perhaps through the combined

influences of home and school. In fact, many of the children who had high letter knowledge in prekindergarten ended up with average or low average word recognition in third grade. Their parents reportedly provided extensive opportunities for their children to learn the letters, but this early knowledge did not "protect" them from later difficulties. Indeed, one child who had among the highest scores on letter knowledge, rhyme sensitivity, nursery rhyme knowledge, and alliteration detection in pre-kindergarten was described by her second grade teacher as having real difficulties with reading. Providing children with enjoyable print-related interactions with a variety of genres of books and materials is likely to be of more lasting value than enforced practice on isolated letters and letter sounds.

The position statement acknowledges the range of home experiences children bring with them to school. Our study has certainly demonstrated a wide range. It is common to hear people say that low income children do not receive as much beneficial experience as middle income children. In our analyses, however, we found relatively few income-related differences. In some activities, ethnicity differences were more apparent than income differences. For example, we found that with respect to educational toys, across all years, the African American children more frequently engaged with them than the European American children. The same pattern obtained with respect to playing word games. Early experience with drawing and writing was more frequent among African American children than European American children. Oral storytelling across all years was most frequent among the middle income African American families. It seems clear that there are some cultural differences that guide the choices parents make for their children. But overall, the individual differences among the families were more salient than differences related to social address.

In sum, the information we collected in our study relates very directly to the listing of recommended practices. The majority of parents from diverse sociocultural backgrounds did engage in many of these practices with their children. Nevertheless, a substantial number also reported less developmentally-appropriate activities such as explicit instruction of letter names, letter-sound correspondences, and word recognition. Our analyses suggest that child outcomes are more positive when there is congruence between policy and practice. To be maximally useful to parents, recommendations such as those provided by the NAEYC/IRA need to go beyond telling parents what they should do to helping them understand how to do it.

Early Childhood Project Publications and Papers from Which the Findings are Drawn

Baker, L. (1999). Opportunities at home and in the community that foster reading engagement. In J.T. Guthrie & D. Alvermann (Eds.), Engagement in reading: Processes, practices, and policy implications (pp. 105-133). New York: Teachers College Press.

Baker, L., Allen, J.B., Shockley, B., Pellegrini, A. D., Galda, L., & Stahl, S. (1996). Connecting school and home: Constructing partnerships to foster reading development. In L. Baker, P. Afflerbach, & D. Reinking (Eds.) Developing engaged readers in school and home communities (pp. 21-41). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Baker, L., Fernandez-Fein, S., Scher, D., & Williams, H. (1998). Home experiences related to the development of word recognition. In J. Metsala & L. Ehri (Eds.), Word recognition in beginning literacy (pp. 263-288). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Baker, L., Mackler, K., Sonnenschein, S., Serpell, R., & Fernandez-Fein, S. (1998, April). Early home experiences and emergent literacy skills as contributors to children's word recognition in the primary grades. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego.

Baker, L., Scher, D., & Mackler, K. (1997). Home and family influences on motivations for literacy. Educational Psychologist, 32, 69-82.

Baker, L., Serpell, R., Sonnenschein, S., Fernandez-Fein, S., & Scher, D. (1994). Contexts of emergent literacy: Everyday home experiences of urban pre-kindergarten children. (Reading Research Report # 24). Athens, GA: Universities of Georgia and Maryland, National Reading Research Center.

Baker, L., Serpell, R., & Sonnenschein, S. (1995). Opportunities for literacy learning in the homes of urban preschoolers. In L. M. Morrow (Ed.), Family Literacy: Connections in schools and communities (pp. 236-252). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Fernandez-Fein, S., & Baker, L. (1997). Rhyme sensitivity and relevant experiences in preschoolers from diverse backgrounds. Journal of Literacy Research, 29, 433-459.

Mackler, K., Baker, L., & Sonnenschein, S. (1999, April). How parents interact with their first grade children during storybook reading: Relations to subsequent reading development. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Albuquerque

Serpell, R., Baker, L., & Sonnenschein, S. (in preparation). Becoming literate in the inner city: The Baltimore Early Childhood Project. New York: Cambridge.

Serpell, R., Sonnenschein, S., Baker, L., Hill, S., Goddard-Truitt, V., & Danseco, E. (1997). Parental ideas about development and socialization of children on the threshold of schooling. (Reading Research Report # 78). Athens, GA: University of Georgia and Maryland, National Reading Research Center.

Sonnenschein, S., Baker, L., Serpell, R., Scher, D., Fernandez-Fein, S., & Munsterman, K. A. (1996). Strands of emergent literacy and their antecedents in the home: Urban preschoolers' early literacy development. (Reading Research Report #48). Athens, GA: University of Georgia and Maryland, National Reading Research Center.

Sonnenschein, S., Baker, L., Serpell, R., & Schmidt, D. (in press). Reading is a source of entertainment: The importance of the home perspective for children's literacy development. In K. Roskos & J. Christie (Eds.), Literacy and play. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sonnenschein, S., Schmidt, D., & Mackler, K. (1999, April). The role of the home in improving children's reading during ealry elementary school. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Albuquerque.

Table 1

Themes in the Family Practices Recommended in the NAEYC/IRA Position Statement

1. Engage in shared book reading.
2. Provide frequent and varied oral language experiences.
3. Encourage self-initiated interactions with print.
4. Visit the library regularly.
5. Demonstrate the value of literacy in everyday life.
6. Promote children's motivation for literacy.
7. Foster a sense of pride and self-efficacy in literacy.
8. Communicate with teachers & be involved with school.

Table 2
Engage in Shared Book Reading

Phase 1 (Pre-school):
Read and reread stories with predictable text to children.
Phase 2 (Kindergarten):
Daily read and reread narrative and informational stories to children.
Phase 3 (Grade 1):
Read to children and encourage them to read to you.
Phase 4 (Grade 2):
Continue to read to children and encourage them to read to you.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Shared storybook reading is a common recurrent activity. Over the years, parents read to their children less often. The greatest decrease in frequency occurs in families where the children are strong readers in Grade 3.

2. Parents talk about print during shared book reading most often when the books have an explicitly educational focus (e.g.,ABC books). Frequent early experience with such books is a stronger predictor of subsequent word recognition than experience with storybooks.

3. The shared storybook experience varies qualitatively depending on whether the parent or child is the reader. When parents read, there is more talk that extends the story content; when children read, there is more talk about word identification. The affective atmosphere of the interaction is more positive when parents read. The affective atmosphere is poorest when parents provide child readers with decoding assistance.

Table 3
Provide Frequent and Varied Oral Language Experiences

Phase 1 (Pre-school):
Talk with children, engage them in conversation, give names of things, show interest in what a child says.
Phase 1: (Pre-school):
Encourage children to recount experiences and describe ideas and events that are important to them.
Phase 2 (Kindergarten):
Play games that involve specific directions (such as "Simon Says").
Phase 2 (Kindergarten):
Have conversations with children during mealtimes and throughout the day.
Phase 3 (Grade 1):
Talk about favorite storybooks.
Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Build a love of language in all its forms and engage children in conversation.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Children who have frequent opportunities to talk with parents at mealtimes and to participate in storytelling have greater narrative competence than those who do not.

2. Children who engage in word play and who have the opportunity to learn nursery rhymes have greater phonological awareness than those who do not. Early nursery rhyme knowledge predicts subsequent word recognition.

Table 4
Encourage Self-Initiated Interactions with Print

Phase 1 (Pre-school):
Provide opportunities for children to draw and print, using markers, crayons, and pencils.
Phase 2 (Kindergarten):
Encourage children's attempts at reading and writing.
Phase 3 (Grade 1):
Suggest that children write to friends and relatives.
Phase 4 (Grade 2):
Engage children in activities that require reading and writing.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Literacy development depends on children choosing to engage with print on a regular basis. The more often children initiated interactions with print in pre-kindergarten, the better their word recognition in Grade 1. The more frequently children independently engaged in reading and writing activities at the beginning of Grade 1, the better their reading (word recognition and comprehension) at the end of Grade 2.

2. Among children who scored low on a composite measure of orientation to print in kindergarten/Grade 1, those who went on to become good readers had more frequent independent experiences with a breadth of print materials (involving both reading and writing) in Grades 2 and 3 than those who subsequently were poor readers.

Table 5
Visit the Library Regularly

Phase 1 (Preschool):
Visit the library regularly.
Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Continue to support children's learning and interest by visiting the library and bookstores with them.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. The frequency of visits to the library did not change from pre-kindergarten through third grade. Middle income children visited the library more often than low income children.

2. Frequency of visits to the library in the pre-kindergarten year was strongly predictive of word recognition in Grades 1, 2, and 3, after controlling for the effects of maternal education.

Table 6
Demonstrate the Value of Literacy in Everyday Life

Phase 2 (Kindergarten):
Aallow children to participate in activities that involve writing and reading (for example, cooking, making grocery lists).
Phase 4 (Grade 2):
Support your child's specific hobby or interest with reading materials and references.
Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Encourage children to use and enjoy print for many purposes (such as recipes, directions, games, and sports).

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Children had frequent opportunities over the years to see the functional value of reading and writing. They participated in food preparation and shopping, and they used print in their hobbies and to play board games.

2. Parents endorsed the perspective that literacy was a necessary ingredient of everyday life. The children themselves were aware of this fact when they were interviewed in first grade as to why it is important to learn to read.

Table 7
Promote Children's Motivation for Literacy

Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Build a **love of language** in all its forms and engage children in conversation.

Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Continue to support children's learning and **interest** by visiting the library and bookstores with them.

Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Encourage children to use and **enjoy print** for many purposes (such as recipes, directions, games, and sports).

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Parents held two contrasting perspectives on literacy:
a. Literacy is a source of entertainment; book reading itself is fun, and there are many other enjoyable activities in which literacy plays a role.
b. Literacy consists of a set of skills that should be deliberately cultivated; children should be given opportunities to practice their emerging competencies.
Children whose parents gave more emphasis to the entertainment perspective had better reading outcomes in Grades 1, 2, and 3 than those whose parents gave more emphasis to the skills perspective.

2. The afffective quality of shared storybook reading when the children were in kindergarten predicted their motivation for reading in Grades 1 and 2.

3. Children with higher levels of motivation in Grade 2 also engaged in more frequent independent leisure reading, which in turn was related to better reading achievement.

Table 8
Foster a Sense of Pride and Self-Efficacy in Literacy

Phase 3 (Grade 1):
Encourage children to share what they have learned about their writing and reading.
Phase 4 (Grade 2):
Show children your interest in their learning by displaying their written work.
Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Find ways to highlight children's progress in reading and writing.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Home observations and parental reports indicated that children's work was frequently displayed around the house. One of the most common parental verbalizations when first grade children were reading to their parents in an observed interaction was praise for their efforts.

2. Children had positive views of themselves as readers in Grades 1 and 2. Those who were struggling had not (yet) lost confidence in their abilities.

Table 9
Communicate with Teachers and Be Involved with School

Phase 3 (Grade 1):
Bring to a parent-teacher's conference evidence of what your child can do in writing and reading.

Phase 4 (Grade 2):
Become involved in school activities.

Phase 5 (Grade 3):
Stay in regular contact with your child's teachers about activities and progress in reading and writing.

Selected Relevant Evidence

1. Most parents believed they shared responsibility with teachers for helping their children learn to read and write.

2. According to teacher reports, most parents had sufficient contact with teachers when their children were in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. The amount of contact declined considerably by Grade 2.